

**Testimony of Gabriel Fonseca, Program Manager, Madonna Place: Families First a
Nurturing Families Network Program
240 Main Street
Norwich, CT 06360**

**Prepared for the Appropriations Committee
Public Hearing – Wednesday, February 18, 2009
Governor's Proposed Budget House Bill No. 6365**

My name is Gabe Fonseca, Program Manager of multiple Children's Trust Fund programs at Madonna Place, a non-profit family support agency in Norwich.

I am here today to voice my concern for Governor Rell's proposed budget which entails the elimination of the Children's Trust Fund (CTF). I ask the members of this committee to contemplate the implications of eliminating the Children's Trust Fund, its entire staff, and transferring some of its programs to the Department of Children and Families.

The Madonna Place has been a partner with CTF for over 10 years. Over the course of our partnership, we have benefited from their leadership and guidance in delivering child abuse and neglect prevention services. As I mentioned, I am currently managing three programs under the CTF umbrella. These programs include a Nurturing Families Network program, a Family Empowerment Program working with fathers and families, and a Family School Connection program located at an elementary school in Taftville. Managing three separate programs can be challenging at times yet having a Technical Assistant (TA) to guide me through programmatic issues is helpful. Each TA has a great deal of knowledge and I am encouraged to turn to them for guidance when needed. Likewise, CTF requires all staff members to participate in networking opportunities. My staff and I benefit from those opportunities. I am concerned that abolishment of CTF would bring drastic change in the networking model. Not having regular networking meetings may hinder information sharing among state providers.

The Children's Trust fund has utilized research findings to guide service and program development. Over the past year, CTF showed a dedication to expanding their services to reach more fathers. Eliminating CTF may impede the growth of fatherhood services here in our state. Our state is considered a leader among nation wide fatherhood experts. Having CTF lead the push for more prevention services for fathers is critical to establishing comprehensive services for the families of our state. My concern is that eliminating CTF will leave the state with less leadership in the prevention of a costly social phenomenon, child abuse and neglect. I respectfully ask you to consider my testimony. I fully understand the difficult tasks you are facing. I trust that with the information that citizens provide, you will make informed decisions.

Thank-you for your attention.

Gabriel Fonseca- Program Manager, Madonna Place, Norwich, CT
